Mystery of What Happened to Mme. Walska's "Career"

Were Cheated Out of the Prima

Donna's Long Promised

Spectacular

**Debut** 

EADERS of this page three weeks ago will remember the very interesting interview with Mme. Ganna Walska, prima donna soprano of the Chicago Opera Company. It was quite an unusual page, because it set forth with entire frankness the singer's point of view of what was really worth while in this world-why her "career" was her whole life.

A "career" is a wonderful thing. Sometimes it seems to be a sort of wicked jinx that pursues its victim with all sorts of mischievous tricks. Then again careers seem to be very nice, kindly things, which go hand in hand through life with you on friendly terms.

Mme. Ganna Walska, the Polish prima donna, is very closely tied up with her career. This article to-day has to do with the latest mishap which seems to have overtaken her career.

The prima donna, it should be remembered, had only last Summer achieved her third and greatest matrimonial adventure by marrying "America's richest bachelor," Mr. Alexander Smith Cochran, the \$80,000,-000 carpet manufacturer. But with all that goes with multi-millions-yachts, town house, country estates, western ranches, etc., etc.—the grand opera bride refused to nestle down into these warm lures of luxury and insisted upon going on with her "career" as a singer.

It was pointed out in the article on this page three weeks ago that it was not easy for a reader who had not the true artistic temperament to quite grasp Mme. Walska-Cochran's point of view that a "career" is more worth while than home and husband.

And it is also hard to understand why Mr. Cochran, the multi-millionaire bridegroom, with all his wealth, mansions and yachts, can't keep his wife at home-can't even control his own wife's voice or hugs or kisses. This was explained by the artiste in her own words.

"Eet ees no problem at all, do you see, monsieur?" chirped the chic little Polish prima donna at her Chicago hotel apartment. "I have marreed, and I also pursue my professeeon, ees eet not so?

"Eef my husband would object to my singing-well, not for long would he be my husband," she continued. "A woman must have her interests. Nevaire could I become interested in ze man so narrowminded zat he would not pairemeet me to follow my career after ze marriage. That ees why eet ees no problem."

The "career" of wifehood, motherhood, social life is no "career" at all. Mme. Walska-Cochran has an artistic soul above such a tiresome commonplace existence

Her career was the only thing-the whole thing. Anything that got in the way of that precious career was going to be run over-whether it was a husband or a home or anything else.

And so it was that Mr. Cochran was left behind in New York to play with his yachts and mansions and clubs and millions, while his artiste-bride, Ganna Walska, took up her abode alone in a Chicago hotel and began vigorous work on the role of Zaza, which was to be her operatic debut.

Has the reader ever seen Geraldine Farrar play Zaza on the stage of the Metropolitan Opera House?

Whatever the reader may have read of love-making in novels, or whatever warm scenes he may have watched in the movies or on the stage, the violent, tropical, passionate love-making of Farrar would be a revelation of possibilities unsuspected. It was understood that Mme. Walska had promised to eclipse Mme. Farrar's lovemaking and show the grand opera audience of Chicago a Zaza that was really worth

In such an inspiring role as the notorious, abandoned creature Zaza, Mme. Ganna Walska-Cochran would show the adoring public how wonderful a thing is a "career and why it was much more worth while to play Zaza on the stage than to play wife in her own home.

The opening night of Zaza had been fixed for Tuesday, December \*21. Every seat had been sold and the musical world of Chicago awaited the great event of the season. That long-looked forward to evening came and passed—but the Chicago music lovers never saw the great Ganna Walska and her overpowering presentation

of wicked Zaza. Something happened.

But exactly what it was that happened seems shrouded in mystery. And a reward is offered of 180,000 yen (or thirty cents) for the true solution of the mystery of what so suddenly happened to Mme. Walska-Cochran's career—and her Zaza.

A few things are known with certainty. It is established that the prima donna packed up and left Chicago the day before she was to make her debut. Arriving in New York the next day she applied for

passports to go to Europe What happened? What could have hap-

Who and what interfered with Ganna Walska's career just on the eve of her greatest effort and most ambitious achieve-

From behind the sceres at the Chicago Opera House came whispers that the prima donna could not sing the role. When the final rehearsal was called it is said that the singer's voice "cracked" on the high notes to the dismay of Gino Marinuzzi, the director of the opera company, and to the petrifaction of Titta Ruffo, who was to sing the other leading role.

But is this merely a vague pretense put out to cover the disappointment of the

Nobody Will Explain Why the Chicago Opera Patrons

Curious Photograph of Mme. Walka-Cochran Hanging up a Painting of Herself by a Distinguished European Artist.

Chicago audience and save the face of the opera management? What really happened to Mme. Walska and her career?

If the reported failure of her voice was not the real cause of her sudden departure from Chicago, then the mystery is deeper and the reward is raised to 500,000 yen (or fifty cents) for the true facts.

It has been reported that Mr. Multimillionaire Cochran made a bargain with the singer that if she would become his bride he would not interfere with her "career." But it has been suggested that the part of Zaza was more than any husband could be expected to stand for. Could it be that Mr. Cochran drew the line at this notorious part and insisted that the role of Zaza should not be considered as included

in her career? If it was in obedience to Mr. Cochran's protest that the prima donna suddenly threw everything over and hurried to New York-then, of course, a happy and appreciative husband would be expected to welcome the bride on her arrival in New York. But no such thing happened. Ganna Walska and her career went straight to the singer's own private residence, at 101 East Ninety-fourth street-the home left her by

her previous husband. Mr. Cochran did not meet her at the train, did not join her at her home, did not seek her out and bring her to his own New

York home on Fifth avenue. If the singer threw up everything, including her career, to join her husband and his millions in New York, it is odd that the singer, accompanied by her lawyer alone, should have sought a passport for Europe the day she reached New York. And it is equally strange that Mr. Cochran, pacing the reading room of the Racquet Club that evening, should have told the reporters that he knew nothing about his wife's plans, did not know that she had applied for a passport to sail for Europe, and that he, the husband, had no plans for joining his wife and her career in Europe.

Then if it is not true that the prima donna's voice "cracked" and it is not true that she threw up everything suddenly in consideration of her husband, then the mystery is still more profound and the re-ward for the true facts is raised to one

million yen (or seventy-five cents). Heretofore Mme. Walska has never refused to discuss her most intimate private affairs with representatives of the newspapers. Her ambitions, her matrimonial affairs, her philosophy of life, have always been very freely and frankly told to re-But since the prima donna packed her trunks and turned her back on Chicago and the opera management not a word has the singer said about herself or her husband, or her art. Not a word about her career could be wrung

from the suddenly silent singer. "I sing because I must. My nature craves the expression which I can give to my talents only through appearing in opera"-Mme. Walska had said just before the promised spectacular debut as Zaza.

But what happened in Chicago after all the long hours of practice and preparation that upset the prima donna's much heralded appearance?

"I sing because I must" --- But why didn't she sing? Just before the day of the debut the

singer said: "All during my honeymoon I studied. I worked to master new roles and perfect myself in my old ones. I shall sing Zaza." But what happened to interfere with all her work and study to perfect herself for

Is there some ill-fated jinx that interferes with Canna Walska and her career? After her marriage to Mr. Cochran last September she told the reporters:

"Retire from the opera, give up my career? For what? To be a society woman in New York or Paris? No, no. I am in love with my husband, but I must have my artistic career. Nothing must interfere with that."

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and the singers were dismayed at the greeting. One report has it that the manager was forced to lower the curtain and refund the price of the seats to the audi-How did Mme. Ganna Walska happen to undertake that disastrous debut down in Havana? Why did the ambitious prima

her into such an unpleasant situation? Well, the man who managed that illfated debut has explained what it was all about. Mr. Anthony Bagarozy, the wellknown impresario, was approached by the singer and consulted as to how she could get a foothold on the Metropolitan grand opera stage. He frankly explained that only singers of experience could hope to gain a place among the Metropolitan grand opera stars. She must first gain experience. The prima donna seemed to have plenty of money, plenty of ambition and plenty of confidence in her career. After talking it over it was decided that madame should get together her jewels and gowns and prepare for the leading role in "Fedora"

and make a try-out in Havana. "But I told her," said Mr. Bagarozy, "that she did not have a world-wide reputation and that it would be difficult to arrange for her to make a debut in Havana, where the musical audiences were quite critical. They know names, and to get others than subscribers we must have singers of recognized merit. I explained that to her and the fact that we might lose money. It was delicate, was it not? But madame said

that would be adjusted. She personally would guarantee us against loss. So, of course, we went to Havana.

- "Madame gets dreadfully nervous when she is in rehearsal. Everything must be just so, and before the audience it is impossible. She gets what seems to be stage fright. She becomes ill.

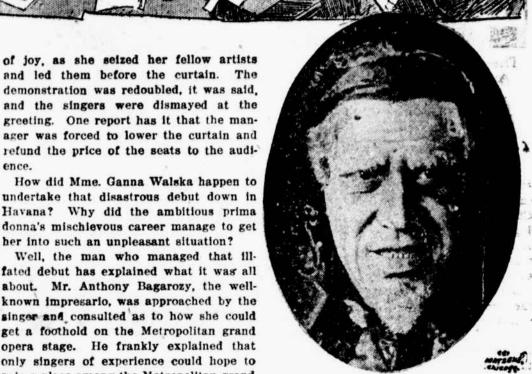
loses her voice. "Then madame spent too much time at teas and affairs and would not give the necessary study to her work. It was always a life of gaiety, and an opera singer to be successful must work, drudge. So when the debut camewell, it was sad."

But perhaps careers of true artists do not always run smooth-

ly. Anyhow, the career which the singer had nursed with But what has been Mme. Walska's casuch tenderness, which meant more to her than husband, home and family, was at last to blossom into the full fruit of her greatest ambition. However her career may have been stunted and starved in the past, the future was assured. Most claborate plans were made for such gowns and such jewels and such scenery as Chicago had never beheld. Her Zaza should be an artistic triumph never to be for-

> Whatever it was that made things go wrong in the Havana grand opera fizzle, there seems to have been every effort made to make sure that Mme. Ganna Walska's career should not slip on a banana

skin in the Chicago debut. It is reported that the ambitious prima donna brought six opera teachers, instrucis said to have exclaimed in a great thrill tors and coaches to Chicago from New



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York to perfect her in the mysteries of opera technique. Among them was said tobe Isador Luckstone, one of the foremostopera coaches in America. She is reported to have paid this man a thousand dollars a week. How much she paid the other five is not known. Madame also had four maids, it is said, to attend to her personal requirements and assist in the career. Bei sides the six professional opera coaches; and the four personal maids, madame, is, said to have had quite a retinue of secre-taries and other personal attendants who were ready to lend a hand night or day in encouraging the career.

But on the eve of that long heralded event something happened to Mme. Walska-Cochran's Zaza-and her career. She did not sing-she did not express herself. And yet we know from the prima dopna's own words that "I sing because I must. My nature craves the expression which I can give to my talents only through appearing in opera."

Why didn't she sing? Did anybody interfere with her giving her talents expression?

In her debut three years ago in Havans, if the report is true, Mme. Ganna Walsku did sing-nobody then interfered with thes craving of her nature to express herself: but the audience got its money back, so it, is said.

Did somebody in Chicago have the courage to ring down the curtain on Zaza before the audience had a chance to assemble and thus, perhaps, avoid the same thing that is said to have happened at the prima

donna's debut in Havana? And how will all this affect Mme. Walska-Cochran's career? "I must have my artistic career; nothing must interfera with that," she asserts.

Some mysterious something certainly has interfered with her career. Is it only a little jolt that her career has received? Or was it quite a knockout?

Will the career be nursed back to life and vigor in New York or will the disappointed career be wrapped up carefully and taken to Europe to be nursed back to

health in some foreign capital? Who will have the joy of seeing Mme. Walska-Cochran's impassioned Zaza which Chicago was cheated out of?

Is there an opera company somewhere in some part of the world which needs the prima donna and will give her a chance to express herself in her interpretation of Zaza? And, if so, will her career start all over again and recover from the Chie cago jolt? Or did something happen in Chicago

which killed, finally and forever, Mmei-Walska's ambition for a career, and will she now, perhaps, settle down for a white as the wife of the man who was "America's richest bachelor" until she won him? Two million yen (or one dollar) will be

offered for the best forecast of what will: be the next/chapter in the "career" of the versatile prima donna,

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Whatever her success abroad in

her native Poland, or elsewhere, the first

record of her and her career in America

seems to begin in 1915, when she appeared on the Century Roof in New York City.

Those who heard her then recall her sap-

phire gown, which was gorgeous; but

there seems to be no record that the Met-

ropolitan Opera management pursued her

with offers to join their galaxy of stars.

Three years ago, it is reported, that the

singer appeared in Havana in "Fedora"

and that while the first act of the opera

was received by the audience quietly,

there was a demonstration during the sec-

ond act. The audience, it is said, became

noisy and shouted the Spanish word which

"They are calling us out," Mme, Walska